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ABSTRACT

Non-traditional study has brought equivalency programs for adults, in-service education programs, institutes and special courses, continuing education centers, and external degrees. The key features of the non-traditional approach to education are redefinition of the roles of student and teacher, the use of learning contracts, and the multiplicity of resources for adult educaton. Lifelong learning will require resource centers with specially trained professional resource librarians. (CH)

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The Future Role of Libraries in Adult Education

Malcolm S. Knowles

First of all, I want to tell you how happy my family and I are to be Southeasterners. If I seem to walk funny, it is because I have so much tar on my heels. We have joined the culture and very happily so.

It seems to me that the thrust, the ferment, the moving edge of our field of adult education that offers the most promise for an expanding role of the public library goes under a number of names: non-traditional study, external degree programs, open university, etc. That is the central theme I'm going to explore with you.

When I got into the field of adult education ninety-nine years ago, the public library was an institution that was central in the field. This was back in the thirties. We had had about ten years of very innovative development in the readers' advisor program, which was a new conceptualization of the adult education role, and which I think we're on the brink of coming back to now, incidentally. (I'll develop that further in a moment.) Then it disappeared from the scene as a pervasive institutional role. In the literature of that time there was constant reference to the public library as the "people's university." We remember those as great years. There was a very strong perception of the library as a central institution in our field. During the forties we didn't hear much about adult education in libraries. Then there was a kind of resurgence during the early fifties, with the flood of money that the Fund for Adult Education fed into the public library system. But, unfortunately, that was soft money, and when it dried up there were not very many funding sources, that I'm aware of anyway, to pick up the work that was done in libraries in that era.

Now, I'm not making any kind of observation about adult education work being done in local libraries. I'm looking at the national picture, and it seems to me that in the last ten or fifteen years adult education has been less central to the purpose of the national library movement. I'm today predicting that within the next ten years it will move back to being very central. Not the exclusive function, certainly, but very central to the function of the public library. I want to explore with you what I perceive to be the forces that will produce this phenomenon.

To my mind, the most exciting and most promising "new" development in our field has been the emergence of non-traditional study as an organizing principle for systematic adult learning. It is not new, in that there have been previous experiments. Goddard College in Vermont has been a non-traditional educational institution for many years, and there have been experiments within larger, established institutions – but these have been isolated special programs. What I perceive happening today is what amounts to a social movement, a national or international social movement, in which non-traditional study is being perceived as a parallel system in many ways to traditional establishment kinds of programs. The best definition of non-traditional study is one that was written by Sam Gould as the Chairman of the Commission on Non-Traditional Study in the preface to *Diversity by Design,* the final report of that Commission, published by Jossey-Bass in 1972. The author actually is the Commission on Non-Traditional Study, which was a joint commission of the Educational Testing Service and the College Entrance Examination Board of Princeton, and was financed by the Carnegie Corporation.

The context of this definition is the ETS and

IR 003 038

CEEB convened a panel of establishment-type, high-prestige academicians, but all of them with some contamination of innovations on their police blotter. Sam Gould had been the President of the State University of New York system, and all of the other members had come from very prestigious positions. The representative from our field, adult education, was Cyril Houle from the University of Chicago, who is just about as respectable as you can get. Well, they sat down around a table and spent quite a bit of time in the early phases of their meetings trying to define what the dickens is non-traditional study. Here is Sam Gould's description of what they came up with:

> Despite our lack of completely suitable definition, we always seemed to sense the areas of education around which our interests centered. This community of concern was a mysterious light in the darkness, yet not at all mysterious in retrospect. Most of us agreed that non-traditional study is more an attitude than a system and this can never be defined except tangentially. This attitude (and here is the heart of the matter) puts the student first and the institution second, concentrates more on the former's need than on the latter's convenience, encourages diversity of individual opportunity rather than uniform prescription, and de-emphasizes time, space, and even course requirements in favor of competence and, where applicable, performance. It has concern for the learner of any age and circumstance, for the degree aspirant as well as the person who finds sufficient reward in enriching life through constant, periodic, or occasional study. This attitude is not new, it is simply more prevalent than it used to be. It can stimulate exciting and high quality educational progress; but it can also, unless great care is taken to protect the freedom if offers, be the unwitting means to a lessening of academic rigor, and even to charlatanism.

Isn't that an intersting definition? And this is the way I have sensed non-traditional study in my survey of it. Let me just give you a sort of consensed overview of what I perceive it to be. There isn't any standard non-traditional study. If there were, then it would no longer be non-traditional. So, what we see happening is a variety of innovative experiments, trying out different ways of delivering educational services to young adults and adults primarily. But they fall into several broad types.

One type is equivalency programs. These programs are designed to help adults gain the information and the skills required to pass equivalency tests, mostly general educational development tests.

Another type is continuing in-service education programs, wich are particularly prominent in the health professions. Nursing, the various medical specialties, and the allied health professions, have mounted massive national programs of continuing education. Nursing, for example, now is the only profession I know of that has its own journal of continuing education. It is called *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*. So, these professions have both national and state and local programs of continuing in-service education. Mostly, these programs are job-oriented, but not exclusively. They are primarily sponsored by either professional associations or by employing institutions. Participation has mostly been voluntary, but a trend is picking up stream across the country to tie continuing education into re-licensure requirements.

The fact is many of these programs still look pretty traditional in their formats, with the lecture method predominating. They are not constrained by credits, grades, and accreditation requirements, so that there is the potential for a great deal of innovation. Examples of innovative methods and curricular organizations are appearing with increasing frequency.

A third category of non-traditional study programs is what can be described as the random conference, institute, and special course activities that are sponsored primarily by the mushrooming divisions of continuing education of community colleges, colleges, and universities. I suppose that one of the most explosive developments in the last ten years has been the expansion of residential continuing education centers around universities. These almost always have a division of short courses, conferences and institutes, that put on programs for general citizens, but especially for occupational groups and professional groups of one sort or another. Now in the last few years there has been a strong movement to find ways of converting participation in these activities into the equivalents of credits, called the Continuing Educational Unit, the CEU. Incidently, the Southeastern region has been the pioneer in making that legitimate. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools was the first to give the CEU accreditation. There are various ways in which the accumu-

lation of CEU's can be converted into credits for a standard degree, and some professional associations are experimenting with establishing criteria for converting CEU's into some sort of certificate.

The fourth kind of non-traditional study, and the one that has received the most publicity recently, is the external degree. The best description of this type is a book by Cyril O. Houle called *The External Degree,* also published by Jossey-Bass in 1972. There are a number of approaches to awarding degrees through non-traditional study. One of them that you are familiar with is giving credit for experience and then building additional instructional work on top of the credit for experience. Brooklyn College pioneered early with having a panel of faculty assess through interviews and examinations, what credit would be allowed for what the individual had learned through his own individual study or experience. Another approach for giving credit for experience is the CLEP – the College Level Entrance Program, with which several libraries are associated.

A number of external degree programs are organized around the concept of competency models rather than course content requirement models. Liberal studies degrees identify the competencies that characterize a liberally-educated person, such as the reasoning, the thinking, the organizing, and communicating skills and the values and attitudes, and award degrees on the basis of development of these competencies. Or, if the program is for a professional degree, such as an education degree, or a library science degree, or medical degree, the competencies will be geared to the performance of the roles of those professions. In graduate programs of adult education we have been dabbling with a competency model for about fifteen years on the basis of two studies that were made back in the late fifties of the competencies that differentiate adult educators who perform at a level of excellency from those that perform at a mediocre level. For example, in our program at Boston University, we had a list of some forty core competencies that all adult educators should have, with additional spaces for specialist competencies. While we still had the course system at Boston University, we were able to relate competencies to courses so that students saw courses as something different from a hurdle to jump over in order to get the degree. They saw them as a resource for developing competencies, so it did create a different feeling about even the course curriculum. But the really new competency-based programs don't have courses. They have collections of learning resources of various sorts. At the University of Massachusetts School of Education, which has gone completely into competency-based professional education, they have developed what they call modules, so they label their program Competency Based-Modular Education. There is a module for each competency. One module might be an independent study program, another might be a field experience, another might be a seminar or student-led project of some sort. A variety of learning strategies are used in competency-based programs.

So much for the general overview. There are two or three key features that are at the heart of this new approach to education. One is the redefinition of the role of student and teacher. The student's role is defined, in non-traditional study, as that of a proactive high-initiative-taking, self-directed learner. The teacher's role is defined not as a transmitter of information, but as a facilitator, technical strategist, guide, consultant and resource person to self-directed learners. In the experiments that have been going on so far in this field, the two problems with which they have experienced difficulty are that few students had the self-concepts and skills of self-directed learners and few teachers knew how to be facilitators and resources to self-directed learners. They discovered that even highly aggressive and individualistic learners had been so conditioned by their previous experience with formal education to be dependent, reactive learners, that they neither had the conceptional map of what a self-directed learner is nor did they have the skills of performing as self-directed learners. One of the things that is happening now in non-traditional study programs across the country is the building into the design of a program for students a concentrated learning experience to develop a conceptional understanding of, and skill in, being a self-directed learner. If anybody is interested in what the differences in these skills are, I have developed a beginning list of them (see chart at end of article).

The other thing that has been happening in

the last couple of years, is the mounting of very intensive programs to retrain teachers. What these programs consist of is (1) helping these teachers reconceptionalize their role as facilitators of learning as compared with the role of teachers or transmitters of knowledge, and (2) developing the attitudes that are conducive to the performance of this role and the skills that are required for it.

A second characteristic of non-traditional study is the growing use of learning contracts. Almost all of the newer non-traditional study programs . — external degree programs, particularly, but many of the continuing education programs — involve the learner in first of all conceptualizing a model of desired competencies, then engaging him in diagnosing where his level of development of those competencies lies. He then emerges with a profile showing which of the competencies in this model he is strong in and which he needs further development in, translating them into learning objectives. What emerges now is a learning contract. For example, I use a learning contract that has four columns. The first column on the left hand side is headed "Learning Objectives," and they will be listed 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. The second column is "Learning Strategies" — in other words, the strategies that will be employed to accomplish these objectives. Each objective will have a different strategy. Some strategies involve independent study or seminars or workshops or institutes; others involve independent study or reading programs; others involve field experience, travel, etc.

The third column is headed "Evidence of Accomplishment of Objectives," and here the student and the mentor, or education consultant or facilitator or reader's advisor, work out together what evidence will really demonstrate the degree to which this particular learning objective has been accomplished.

Then the fourth column is "Means and Criteria of Validating the Evidence". Now this is saying it is not only that we collect the evidence, but also that we need to have some people we trust and whom we respect, feed back to us whether that evidence is convincing to them.

The student emerges, usually from a fairly intensive face-to-face session with a mentor or with a panel of mentors, with a contract which specifies what objectives are to be achieved to get a degree. When a student thinks he has evidence of the accomplishment of these objectives, he will convene the panel and present his evidence. The panel will decide whether the evidence is convincing enough to award the degree.

The third feature that the non-traditional study programs provide is the multiplicity of resources and vehicles for engaging in study. They do not perceive that most or even much of the learning necessarily takes place under their control. In fact, there is one external degree program in the country, Empire State College in New York, that does not even have a faculty. No courses are offered. What they have is learning resource centers where the students come in and do their diagnostic work and construct their contracts. Then the students go out into the community and to other institutions, engage in the learning strategies, and come back to Empire State for validation of evidence of completion of their contracts. What is happening as a result of this approach to learning is that a much wider variety of community resources are beginning to be perceived as useful, valid, and respectable resources for learning. Here is where I think the library is going to experience a renewal, an expansion. Let me read Recommendation 31 from *Diversity by Design*, page 82. The recommendation is: "The public library should be strengthened to become a far more powerful instrument for non-traditional education that is now the case." Then there are a couple of pages describing the hoary and respectable tradition of the library as an educational institution. But then there are a couple of points I thought you might be interested in hearing.

> One very important service of the library warrants special mention here. The public library can be particularly supportive for people who are working for external degrees or other non-traditional credentials, as well as for those who are planning such programs. Programs of this sort are underway already in White Plains, Boston, San Diego, Louisville, New York, Dallas, St. Louis, and elsewhere, and several states have pooled services to enhance the availability of materials. To give but one example, in several cities, the public libraries are furnishing the information about the College Level Examination Programs and are assisting readers to find the books and other materials that they need to prepare for these and other examinations."

Then they go on to recommend the kinds of roles that they perceive libraries might play. I think the 1972 report of the American Library Association on Future Directions proposed that libraries should become learning counseling centers – was that the phrase that they used? But in your own literature there are policy recommendations of this sort.

Well, let me give you mine. As I see it, as learning becomes reinstitutionalized as a lifelong process, and as a process that takes place as a part of life, and in interaction with other aspects of living, we will gradually see the dissolution of traditional education – teaching instruction institutions – and will see coming in their place learning resource centers, by whatever name, that will contain several elements. First of all, they will contain specialists in life planning, goal formation, identity formation, and developmental needs diagnosis – specialists in the diagnostic part of the planning-for-learning process. I see this as being a totally new role that we don't have anybody performing now. It is not the reader's advisory service role; that is the second component I see. But I see a whole new professional role emerging here which is that of educational diagnosticism and consultant. I predict that within the next ten years we will have graduate training programs to prepare people to perform this role. We have people doing it, but not systematically. They are doing it without knowing that this is what they are doing.

A second component, a second resource that will be in this center, is an educational strategy resource, a person who knows about the resources that are available in the community for learning and who knows how to structure learning experiences with learners so that he is able to tap into those resources. This is closer to the reader's advisor, except that the reader's advisor didn't have the outreach into other institutions that I preceive this educational resource consultant having. Then there will be a whole slew of educational resource managers. I suppose the closest thing that we have to this at the moment is our media specialists and reference librarians and the people who are able to organize and make available resources of a variety of sorts to learners. That is the professional population of the educational institution of the future, I think. Just those three kinds of roles being performed. There won't be any teachers, there won't be any need for them. We will have self-directed learners making use of resourses of all sorts. Now, when you think about it, what institution is most like that right now? Isn't it the library? The institution that I just described as the educational institution of the future is more like the library than any of our existing schools, colleges, or universities, except the libraries in them.

In fact, I forsee the time when there won't any longer be adult educators as we know them. We will all be more like librarians, we who are adult educators. There will be added components to the whole, but we will be learning resource managers. I perceive the time when the difference between our two professions will disappear and there won't be a graduate school of library science and a graduate program of adult higher education. But there will be a learning consultant profession, or something of that sort.

So, I see the library as being, in the long pull, maybe not in the next ten years, but maybe in the next quarter century, the most rapidly expanding educational institution of all in our country. Incidently, that is what the Commission of Non-Traditional Study predicts too. So, live well.

Ways of Learning

Resources for learning	*Required conditions*	*Required skills*
Reactive Teacher in traditional course	Willingness to be dependent. Respect for authority. Commitment to learning as means to an end (e.g., degree). Competitive relationship with fellow students.	Ability to listen uncritically. Ability to retain information. Ability to take notes. Ability to predict exam questions.
Proactive Printed materials (and experts)	Intellectual curiosity. Spirit of inquiry. Knowledge of resources available. Healthy skepticism toward authority. Criteria for testing reliability and validity. Commitment to learning as a developmental process.	Ability to formulate questions answerable by data. Ability to identify data available in printed materials (e.g., by Table of Contents, Index, etc.) Ability to scan quickly. Ability to test data against criteria of reliability and validity. Ability to analyze data to produce answers to questions.
Resource people (supervisors, experts)	Institutional commitment to individual growth as capital investment. Definition of role of supervisor as including "resource for learning." Time availability by both supervisor and employee for conferences. Inclusion of both supervisor's and employee's learning accomplishments in reward system. Spirit of mutual assistance in growth and development.	By Supervisor: Ability to convey respect, caring, and support. Ability to provide data (and feedback) objectively and nonthreateningly. Ability to ask probing questions while keeping locus of responsibility in employee. Ability to use employees as resource for his own learning. Ability to listen emphatically. By employee: Ability to formulate goals. Ability to assess present level of performance. Ability to collect and analyze data about performance nondefensively. Ability to relate so supervisor as a resource for learning. Ability to be open and honest with supervisor.
On-the-job and life experiences	Collaborative relationships with colleagues. Commitment to learning as a developmental process. Institutional support for learning from mistakes. High valuation of self-direction.	Ability to collect data through: (1) own observation, (2) feedback from supervisors, peers, and subordinates, (3) analysis of records. Ability to use data for self-diagnosis of needs for self-improvement. Ability to accept responsibility for own learning. Ability to experiment with new behavior.